

# Novel·Ties

## THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS

REBECCA SKLOOT



## A Study Guide

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**LEARNING LINKS**

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## For the Teacher

This reproducible study guide consists of instructional material to use in conjunction with the novel *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. Written in chapter-by-chapter format, the guide contains a synopsis, pre-reading activities, vocabulary and comprehension exercises, as well as extension activities to be used as follow-up to the novel.

NOVEL-TIES are either for whole class instruction using a single title or for group instruction where each group uses a different novel appropriate to its reading level. Depending upon the amount of time allotted to it in the classroom, each novel, with its guide and accompanying lessons, may be completed in two to four weeks.

The first step in using NOVEL-TIES is to distribute to each student a copy of the novel and a folder containing all of the duplicated worksheets. Begin instruction by selecting several pre-reading activities in order to set the stage for the reading ahead. Vocabulary exercises for each chapter always precede the reading so that new words will be reinforced in the context of the book. Use the questions on the chapter worksheets for class discussion or as written exercises.

The benefits of using NOVEL-TIES are numerous. Students read good literature in the original, rather than in abridged or edited form. The good reading habits formed by practice in focusing on interpretive comprehension and literary techniques will be transferred to the books students read independently. Passive readers become active, avid readers.

## PRE-READING ACTIVITIES AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Preview the book by reading the title and the author’s name. Look at the cover and the back of the book. What do you think the book will be about? Do you think the book will be fiction or nonfiction?
2. **Science Connection:** What do you know about cancer cells? Brainstorm with a group of your classmates to fill in a K-W-L chart, such as the one below, about cancer cells.

Read the Background Information on page three in this study guide and jot down what you know in the first column. List your questions in the second column. After you finish reading the book, add anything you learned in the last column.

### Cancer Cells

What I Know -K-	What I Want to Know -W-	What I Learned -L-

3. Look at the back of the book and become familiar with the timeline and the cast of characters. You may need to refer to these as you read the book. What is the span of time that is covered in the book? List the members of Henrietta’s immediate family.
4. In 1947 the Nuremberg Code was produced. Research the code and write about how you think this code might affect scientific research.
5. This book is the result of extensive research, personal interviews, audios, videos, medical records, and other primary sources. Choose someone you know or a person you admire and write a research paper describing that person using any resources available.
6. Find maps of Maryland, Virginia, and Baltimore so that you locate the places mentioned in the story.
7. Look on the internet to find information about Johns Hopkins Hospital which was rated the top hospital in the United States for 22 years. Picture what it must have been like for Deborah and her brother Lawrence to enter this imposing structure.

**A Few Words About This Book – Chapter 5 (cont.)**

II. *Point of View*—In literature, the point of view refers to the person telling the story. It can be narrated in the first person by a character in the book or in the third person by the author.

From whose point of view is this story written?

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Is this an appropriate point of view for a nonfiction book?

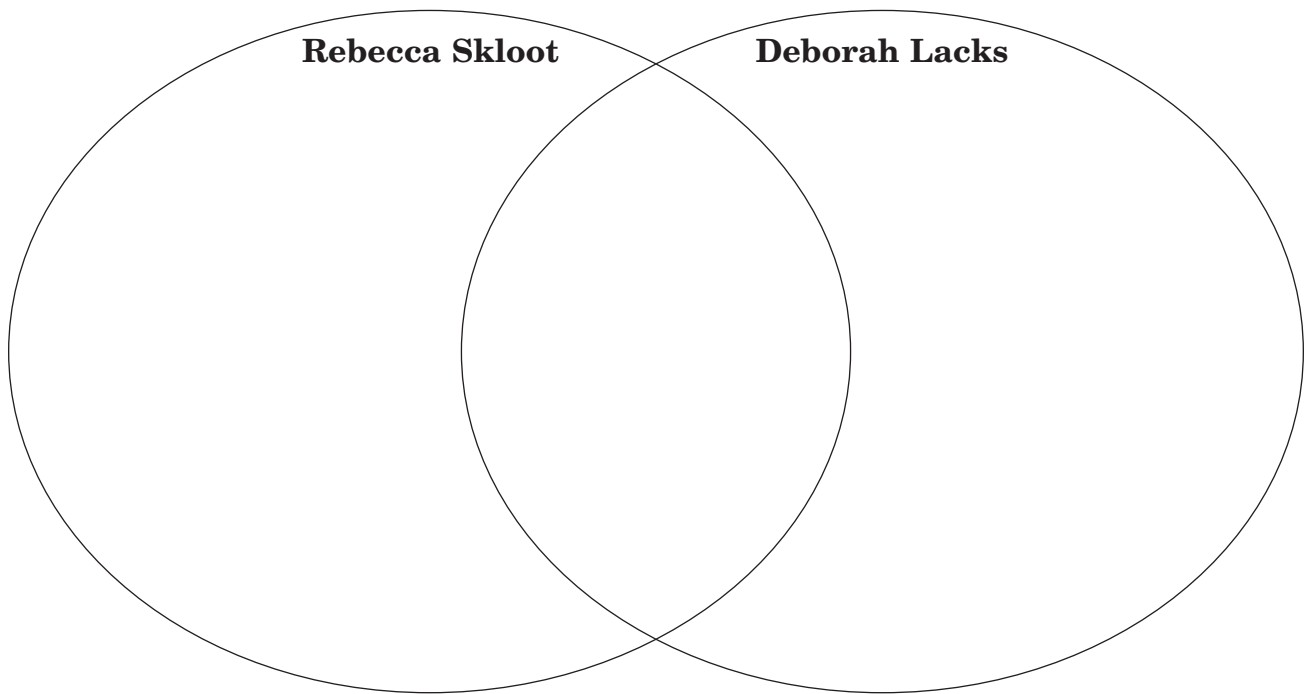
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**Literary Element: Characterization**

Rebecca Skloot and Deborah Lacks come from different backgrounds. Use the Venn diagram below to compare Rebecca and Deborah. Write the traits they have in common in the overlapping part of the circles.



**Writing Activities:**

1. Imagine you are Henrietta and write your feelings when you first notice the knot in your stomach.
2. Write a nonfiction description about your early life, or choose a photograph and write a nonfiction narrative about the person in the picture.